

Evaluation Report of the DCOF Proposals in the Philippines

Allen Randlov

May 4-11, 1998

The evaluation report was conducted under the auspices of the United States Agency for International Development. The evaluation was conducted by the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund and War Victims Fund Contract, Contract Number HRN-C-00-95-0004-00. The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development or TvT Associates

Additional information or copies of this report can be obtained by contacting:

Displaced Children and Orphan Fund & War Victims Fund
North Tower
1300 Pennsylvania Ave, Suite 405
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 789-1500

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I went to Manila to work with the Mission and Rob Horvath for the week of May 4, 1998. The purpose was to participate in the review of five proposals that had been submitted for DCOF funding in Vietnam. The Mission has my detailed comments. I ranked the proposals in the following order, with the last scored low enough that I considered it out of the competition.

1. Pearl Buck Foundation
2. Catholic Relief Services
3. World Vision
4. World concern
5. Counterpart International

During Friday afternoon, at the final review of the proposals, Mike Calavan mentioned that these particular grants were worthy of some sort of special evaluation or research. He said his prior work as a social sciences researcher told him that there was a unique opportunity here. Other members of the review team brought up the issue of management units. Wouldn't this require another contract and thus another Mission management unit? Wouldn't this be especially difficult to handle now that it looked like the Mission would have four rather than three grants? Mike's response was that, yes it would require more effort for the Mission, but that the benefits should be great enough to the Mission, to the DCOF/WVF, and to Vietnam to make it worth doing. Mike's idea took into consideration that the four grants would not total the amount of funding reserved for Vietnam. He felt that the outcome of this research/evaluation would be more valuable than providing the PVOs with additional funds for a time extension of their activities, or any other methods to make up the funding deficit.

I mentioned that this was as much evaluation as research. That so far most DCOF/WVF evaluations have been arranged and implemented by AID/W and TvT, thus minimizing any additional burden on the Mission. Possibly this approach could be taken for the evaluation he was proposing.

The basic idea is that we have four projects all trying to help disabled kids. Pearl Buck and CRS deal with mainstreaming in public schools but have quite different approaches. CRS will do much less training than the Pearl Buck but at the same time deal with a broader range of disabilities. This must mean that CRS will deal only with less severe disabilities while Pearl Buck will deal

with kids that range from minimally hearing impaired to those that are deaf. World Vision will do a standard Community Based Rehabilitation project, using the same minimum amount of training for supervisors and volunteers as is usual. The project will not have the resources that I would expect are needed for supervision or referrals. World Vision has said, especially in their concept paper, that CBR projects in Vietnam (and worldwide) have had many problems and have never been adequately evaluated. Finally World Concern will try vocational rehabilitation. This is something that I have always thought was extremely important but also extremely difficult to do.

It would be valuable for the DCOF/WVF to evaluate World Vision and world concern. Funding World Vision's CBR project gives the DCOF/WVF an opportunity to do a thorough evaluation of a CBR program and decide once and for all if CBR is a strategy that USAID should support through these funds. I also feel that if we finally get a good vocational rehab project off the ground, for similar reasons, it should get a serious evaluation.

From Vietnam's perspective, a good evaluation of CRS vs. Pearl Buck's approach to mainstreaming disabled kids could help tremendously in shaping future policy. The question is can this be done and how could it be done. Mike's original idea was a contract with a consulting company or maybe a University. My first thought was that if we could find someone with appropriate credentials, who spoke Vietnamese, and who would agree to work with the grantees to develop evaluation plans over several years, the cost and the contractual complexity could be minimized.

One approach would be to evaluate each project on its own terms. I think this would be valuable to Vietnam and to the DCOF/WVF for the reasons I outlined above and is fairly straight forward. But what Mike was thinking of was a comparative study that would measure the impact vs. the cost of different approaches to improving the lives of disabled kids. Here, the big problem will be finding a way to compare between one approach and another and how to value outcomes (like educational achievement vs. health improvements of a CBR project). This is going to take a lot of thought and some investigation into how other projects have been evaluated. The next step in fleshing out the feasibility of a comparative evaluation would be some time spent in USAID's reference center and/or good library (or, perhaps the Internet).

Finally, even if nothing happens in terms of a special evaluation of these projects. One thing that should happen is to make sure that the final proposals from the grantees have good evaluation plans. For example neither CRS nor Pearl Buck had any plans to measure educational achievements of disabled kids. All their indicators were of project processes. Similarly World Vision was not planning any sort of evaluation of the impact of their activities on physical well being of kids. World Concern did have some ideas about impact of vocational rehab on family income, but their ideas need to be further developed. The Mission intended to include better evaluation plans along with other concerns in the letters asking for final proposals.